

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Rod Johnson, do you wish to discuss the bill.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Just briefly. I guess I'd like to bring up one point that has not been discussed, or at least has not been touched on enough at least in my mind. When we were discussing this bill in committee, there was a lot of discussion about which public entity should be involved in the certifying of the annual report. Should it be the State Auditor's office? Is that an appropriate office to do this kind of certifying? Or should it be, as Senator Hall said, as in other states, with the Public Service Commission? Or should it be with the local municipality, since they negotiate with the gas companies for rates? So, that is the issue that will be before either the Natural Resources Committee or more likely, the Urban Affairs Committee when we discuss the new bill that Senator Will has put in. But, the issue I think has gone beyond whether or not the report is necessary. I think as we've said here, the body seems to be in favor of making sure that subsidization, or cross-subsidization of sales and service with gas rates does not occur. The question is, and I think this is the debate that we're going to have in committee and maybe again on the floor on Select File in this bill, is what public entity should be involved in the regulating of this particular arena? The concern, I might add, with some people I know, with the issue of Public Service Commission is, well, if we give them this particular authority, then will we not at some point in time, take away the gas negotiations that go between the companies and the municipalities and move that on up to the PSC since they're doing this? That is obviously something that we might discuss again in committee. But I guess the issue...the real issue at hand right now is trying to decide which entity, local or state, should be deciding or checking on these reports to make sure that that subsidization is not happening.

SPEAKER BAACK: Thank you, Senator Johnson. Before we proceed any further, I would like to introduce a guest of Senator Will. We have Kathleen Coash, the Mrs. Nebraska. Would you please stand and be welcomed by the Legislature? Thank you for being with us. Anyone else wishing to discuss the advancement of LR 301? Seeing no one, Senator Hall, did you wish to close on the advancement?

SENATOR HALL: Mr. Speaker, I would just move to advance to the E & R Initial.